



### **Symposium 9.3**

## **Antibiotic restrictions? Are they ethical?**

### **Professor Alastair V Campbell**

Director for Centre for Biomedical Ethics  
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine  
National University of Singapore

The global increase in antimicrobial resistance, including the emergence of multi-resistant bacterial strains, has created a public health problem of potential crisis proportions. The need to control the situation has led healthcare authorities worldwide to introduce measures in both hospital and community settings to restrict antibiotic prescribing. Often, these institutional interventions are driven by ecological considerations and cost-effectiveness analysis, without a thorough examination of their ethical impact.

An effective strategy to manage antimicrobial resistance needs to be informed by both scientific and ethical analysis. In this regard, I shall highlight some ethical issues and dilemmas arising from current efforts against antimicrobial resistance. Specifically, I shall discuss how antibiotic restrictions may create undue conflicts between the doctor's responsibility to the patient to maximize therapy and his/her responsibility to minimize resistance and promote public health. Ethical principles and concepts, such as autonomy, beneficence, the right to informed consent and justice shall be used to frame the discussion. Addressing the pressures of antibiotic restrictions on the ethical dimensions of the physician-patient relationship would help reduce inappropriate antibiotic prescribing, a vital step towards achieving success in managing resistance development.